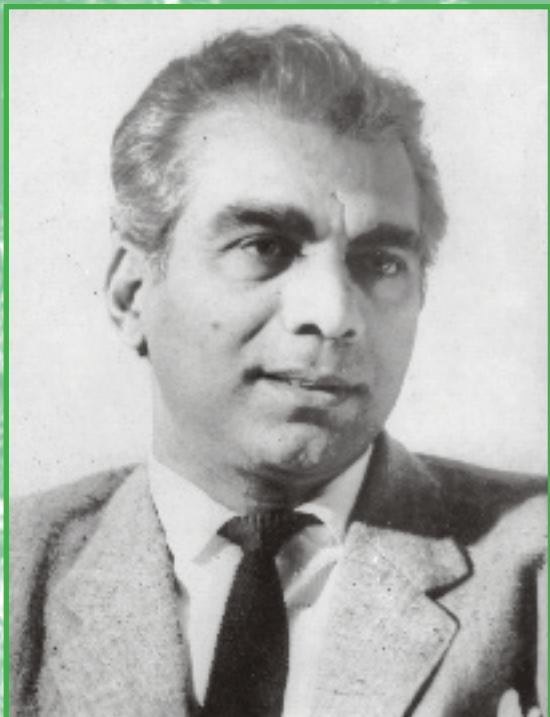


# **President Cheddi Jagan speaks on Environment and Development**



**Selected Speeches 1992 -1997**

Compiled and edited by Navin Chandarpal

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# **Introduction**

**D**r. Cheddi Jagan was elected Executive President of Guyana in October 1992. He immediately began the process of “Rebuilding Guyana” which he had promised the electorate.

Dr Jagan brought to his Presidency the unique blend of a wealth of experience and knowledge together with an uncompromising dedication to the cause of eradicating poverty through a people-centered approach to development.

In shaping the rebuilding agenda, Dr Jagan demonstrated his deep understanding and acceptance of the essential principles of the sustainable development approach which had emerged just a few months before his election at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and presented to the world in the form of the “Rio Declaration” and its Action Plan “Agenda 21”.

He did not believe that Agenda 21 was an all-embracing adequate solution to the development challenges facing the world. But he found the principle of the balanced approach between the needs of development and the protection of the environment to be consistent with his own commitment.

Dr. Jagan is often remembered and recognised for his passionate speeches and actions on major political, economic and social issues both at the national level and internationally. His outstanding proposals on the National Democratic Path for Guyana and the New Global Human Order for the Planet are the major hallmarks of his development writings.

In such a setting, his contributions on environment and development can be easily over-looked in terms of their own specific strengths and significance.

But for those who were actively engaged in the period of his Presidency in areas of Natural Resources and Environmental Management, Dr Jagan’s leadership and achievements in these areas were also monumental.

A clear signal of his commitment to the sustainable development approach was his decision, within the first weeks of taking office, to carry forward the development of the Iwokrama Rainforest Programme which was initiated by his predecessor, President Desmond Hoyte. In doing so however, Dr. Jagan introduced a democratic and consultative approach which was always a fundamental component of his method of governance.

He insisted on a Public discussion on the terms under which the Government would enter into an Agreement with the Global Environment Facility to develop the interim phase of the Iwokrama Programme. On occasions when Dr Jagan made presentations in relation to the Iwokrama Programme, he fully represented

the expectations and concerns expressed by various groups of Guyanese at the public forums.

In the process of developing the Rebuilding Plan for Guyana, Dr. Jagan recognised the critical need to utilize the country's natural resources in an efficient and environmentally friendly manner. On this score, he clearly expressed the willingness of Guyana to follow a mixed approach of conservation, to the highest level possible, of our natural resources - particularly our bio diversity resources-together with sustainable utilization when economic growth and poverty alleviation required the marketing of our natural resources.

At the same time, he emphasised that the huge debt burdens were placing great pressures on poor developing countries to encourage and accept large investments -local and foreign- for exploitation of their natural resources.

In this context, Dr. Jagan proposed a very radical or maybe a revolutionary approach for mutually beneficial results. He called on the Developed Countries to cancel the debt of the Developing Countries as a financial reward for the preservation of fragile eco-systems, especially pristine tropical rain forests in countries such as Guyana.

Dr. Jagan's speeches and other presentations on a wide range of issues can never be easily reduced to a separate subject areas. He was always seeking to have broad comprehensive approaches which integrated his thoughts on issues such as the New Global Human Order, National Democracy, Disarmament and World Peace and Environment and Development. Fortunately, there were some presentations made at special forums which focused on themes of Environment and Development.

Unfortunately, Guyana and the World at large suffered a serious setback with Dr. Jagan's untimely death even before he could complete his first term as President.

Dr. Jagan was at the time of his death, the Honorary President of the Guyana Agricultural & General Workers Union. As a small contribution to the education of Guyanese workers on issues of Sustainable Development, GAWU has agreed to publish this collection of Selected Presentations by Dr. Jagan on issues of Environment and Development.

The presentations published in this booklet were made during the short period of Dr. Jagan's Presidency from October 1992 to March 1997. Though short in duration, it was a period of remarkable achievement. Democracy was restored and expanded, human rights and civil liberties were recognised and honoured, the GDP growth averaged between 6 to 7 percent annually and the physical and social infrastructure were massively improved.

In the hectic pace of the rapid growth of the period, it was also very easy to overlook many of Dr. Jagan's groundbreaking achievements in areas of Environment and Development.

The policy framework was set out in the first National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) in 1994. For the preparation of the Plan and as a formal arrangement to provide advice and coordination on issues of Environment and Development, Dr. Jagan had established through Cabinet the Natural Resources and Environment Advisory Committee (NREAC) chaired by his Adviser on Science, Technology and the Environment.

Dr. Jagan met regularly with the NREAC and worked with it to develop key sectoral policy papers on issues such as forestry, mining, land use planning, renewable energy and environmental management. He also interacted with the NREAC in the preparation of projects to deal with climate change, biodiversity – including the development of protected areas- and natural resources management.

A major highlight of Dr Jagan's Presidency was the development and passage of legislation creating the Environmental Protection Act and the Environmental Protection Agency in 1996. At that time there were many strong voices who felt that the Act and the Agency would undermine the development agenda. Dr. Jagan recognised those concerns but felt that the alternative of no legislation would be a recipe for uncontrolled environmental damage.

The Omai spill had occurred while the Act was being prepared. When Dr. Jagan declared the event as an "Environmental Disaster," there were many who felt that he was too harsh. His response was to make it clear to all that no investment was so sacred to be allowed to wreak havoc on our environment.

In moving forward, Dr. Jagan persisted with the Environmental Protection Act but insisted that a well balanced approach be developed.

Dr. Jagan paid special attention to the Forestry and Mining Sectors. He encouraged the producers at all levels to improve their management practices and encouraged the projects which resulted in reducing the negative environmental impacts in these sectors.

In less than five years, President Cheddi Jagan transformed the approach to natural resources and environmental management in Guyana in a very decisive way. He not only guided by his speeches but also by his strong actions. He started Guyana not only on the road of rebuilding its political, economic and social life but also set Guyana on the sustainable development path based on a sound balance of economic growth with good environmental stewardship.

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**Speech by  
His Excellency the President  
Dr Cheddi Jagan  
for the dedication of the Iwokrama Rain Forest Programme  
to the Indigenous People of the World  
on World Environment Day**

June 5, 1993

**T**hroughout the world, people are today observing World Environment Day. This is indeed an occasion for serious reflection on the way in which human activities are making their impacts on our natural world.

On a global scale there is serious cause for alarm: Natural resources are being exploited without due care for the needs of the future. And the effects of various physical and chemical processes include not only pollution but also the disturbance of vital balances.

Fortunately, these destructive tendencies have been recognised while there is still time. The threats of the depletion of the ozone layer and the catastrophic effects of global warming are now important elements in the thinking of mankind. But recognition of threats and dangers is a mere starting point. The urgent need is for coordinated deliberate action to stop the existing madness.

On this score, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was a great stimulus. The long deliberations and the comprehensive conclusions of AGENDA 21 provide a good framework for positive action.

In many areas of human activity there are pitched battles between those who utilise resources or in other ways make changes to the existing natural landscape and those who wish to keep nature intact.

Arguments have been strong on both sides - on the one hand, the view that resources mean nothing to people if they are locked away and preserved, on the other, the view that the removal of resources disturbs the natural balances and therefore threatens the very existence of our planet.

The outcome of UNCED has helped in a large way to tackle this conflict frontally. The recognition of the need for the pursuance of a path of sustainable development squarely addresses the dual problems of simultaneously utilising natural resources for human development while maintaining the necessary balances in nature and ensuring the continued existence of those resources.

Of course, such an approach is more easily said than done. There are several factors which militate against fullest commitment to sustainable practices.

At one extreme, the greedy insatiable groups plunder resources with no concern about the consequences in order to make quick large profits. At the other end, those driven by poverty make desperate attempts at survival by also scrambling for resources without any regard for sustainability.

The road towards the fulfilment of the objectives of UNCED will not be an easy one, but it will be made less difficult by a more humane approach by those who have excessive power to exploit the resources generated by nature.

*The path of sustainability is attendant with hurdles for developing countries like ours. Entrapped by massive debt burdens, there are serious pressures to exploit our resources in a desperate manner.*

*The preservation of our planet calls for a genuine partnership between the developed and the developing world. The entire planet is paying the price for the ruthless exploitation that helped to make some nations great. It cannot now be fair to ask the developing world to remain in a state of underdevelopment in order to clean the mess which they contributed very little to.*

*The developing world which is geographically in possession of a sizeable part of the world's resources can play a vital role in preserving our planet if it is given an even break and a new lease on life.*

*There is a need for the urgent cancellation of the debts owed by developing countries to the developed world.*

Debt servicing, which in the case of Guyana gobbles 89 per cent of every dollar earned from revenue, prevents an underdeveloped country from improving its system of pure water supply, its sewerage disposal system, its drainage facilities and a host of other services vital to a healthy environment.

It prevents us from building our institutional capacity and recruiting and training necessary personnel to undertake the task of Environmental monitoring and protection.

There is a saying that “han wash han mek han tun clean”. Poor nations with very small consumption of fossil fuels and other contributors to global warming and ozone depletion can play a major role in helping the earth fight back. But we cannot play our part with hands tied and knees bent under duress.

Now is the time to give Agenda 21 a chance by the building of a genuine

partnership between the developing and developed world through the removal of debt burdens and an end to the unbridled plunder of the resources of the underdeveloped world.

On our part, the Government will shortly be laying before Parliament the Environmental Protection Act which will address comprehensively numerous areas of concern on environment. An Agency will be established with necessary power to monitor and protect the environment.

One of the major natural resources in our country is our forest. The world over there is much cause for concern over the rapid rate of deforestation in many countries. Many like to regard our forests as the lungs of the earth, serving to keep our atmosphere clean.

My predecessor, Mr Desmond Hoyte, had committed to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 1989, an area of 350,000 hectares of tropical forest for a project for sustainable use. My Government has honoured this commitment and has organised discussions at open forums in order to obtain maximum involvement of the Guyanese nation in the programme. Following those discussions, the government signed an agreement with the Global Environment Facility which will provide funding for the first stages of the Iwokrama Rainforest Programme as it is popularly known.

I am happy to note that the Interim Board of Trustees has given due consideration to the many concerns raised by the broad cross section of Guyanese who participated in the open forum discussions.

I take this opportunity to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme and the Global Environment Facility for their great support in making this Programme a reality.

I also wish to express gratitude to the Interim Board of Trustees and the many participants in the Guyana Inter Agency Committee and the Guyana Counterpart Technical Team for their strenuous efforts to put this grand programme into top gear.

I am specially pleased that Dr Swaminathan and his team have decided to base the initial research projects on “the ecological prudence and conservation practices of Guyanese Amerindian communities”.

This is indeed very significant. The tropical Rain Forests of Guyana are in the main still intact unlike the forests in most other parts of the world. And this could not have been so had it not been for the ecological prudence of Guyanese Amerindians. It is most fitting that such a major international research programme

will be paying full recognition to the wisdom of our indigenous peoples.

It is also known that indigenous peoples the world over have in a similar way been practicing very prudent methods of using the forests.

It is also very fitting that this programme is being launched in the International Year of the Indigenous People. The theme of this year is the “Indigenous People: A New Partnership”. This is indeed a great partnership in the making.

We have benefitted from the wise practices of the indigenous peoples over the centuries. We are now beginning a programme which will study these practices. In return, this programme must contribute in a very meaningful way to the maintenance of the great legacy of our Indigenous people, to the continuation of their prudent practices and to the sharing of their knowledge and wisdom.

I have the great pleasure and honour to dedicate the initial projects of the IWOKRAMA Rain Forest Programme to the Indigenous People of the World. □

**Forward by**  
**President Cheddi Jagan**  
**in Publication on Iwokrama Strategic Plan**

The offer of a substantial portion of Guyanese territory to establish the Iwokrama International Rain Forest Programme has been endorsed by two successive Guyanese governments. This step is generally understood and supported by the Guyanese people as a whole. My Government supports the Iwokrama Programme as an opportunity for the world to learn more about the preservation of the rich biodiversity of our forests. We regard this venture as a catalyst for the management of our forest resources in a more sustainable manner. We value the prospects for useful research and for the training of our people. We see it as an opportunity to generate knowledge for the world while bringing economic benefits to Guyanese.

The Iwokrama Programme is more than an endeavour to serve the interests of Guyana. Iwokrama is a gift we make to the world without any loss to ourselves.

Guyanese and the world at large owe a debt of gratitude to those who are helping to make a success of the Iwokrama dream. My special thanks to UNDP and the Commonwealth Secretariat, together with organisations like the International Development Research Centre of Canada, which have been worthwhile partners in this project. My thanks also to the Interim Board of Trustees and especially to its Chairman, Dr M.S. Swaminathan, for their untiring efforts.

I also want to express my thanks to the small Iwokrama staff and to my compatriots, especially the members of the Amerindian community, whose help and support have been most valuable.

Iwokrama is a bold initiative housed in the forests of a small developing country. Understandably, therefore, the planning and preparatory process has been careful, cautious and sometimes slow. However, a number of recent events provide a signal that the time has come for this Programme to move rapidly to the next phase. One such signal is the recent unanimous approval by the Parliament of Guyana of the required legislation which I have since signed into law. Another is the preparation of the Strategic Plan which you now hold in your hands.

The non-binding Forest principles adopted at the Rio Summit include this statement about the global responsibility with regard to forests: "The agreed full incremental cost of achieving benefits associated with forest conservation and sustainable development requires increased international cooperation and should be equitably shared by the International community." It is with a sense of pride that I say that Guyanese are making more than their expected contribution to this effort. Duty demands, and future generations deserve, that those who read this Strategic Plan should seek to help in this noble effort by doing what lies in their power. □

**Statement by His Excellency  
Dr. Cheddi Jagan, President of Guyana  
to the High Level segment of the Global Conference on  
the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developning States**

Bridgetown, Barbados

May 5th, 1994

Mr. President,

Excellencies, Heads of State, Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I extend congratulations to Prime Minister Sandiford, President of the Conference and the Government and people of Barbados for hosting this Conference and providing a very encouraging working atmosphere and to the United Nations and other organisations for providing necessary resources and facilities to make this conference not only possible – but the success that it is.

Mr. President,

Today, I have a dual role at this historic conference as I represent not only the people of Guyana, but also speak for the CARICOM region on environmental matters.

Guyana, as you know is not an island, but this does not prevent us from participating and supporting the efforts of the conference. The reason is simple. Guyana shares many of the developmental and environmental problems of Small Island Developing States. It is important to note that 90% of the Guyanese people live and work on its low lying coastal zone which includes populated islands larger in size than many island states.

Guyana is, therefore, as ecologically fragile and vulnerable to environmental damage as any small island developing state.

*Mr. President, as we debate the issues here, Guyana's sea defenses are crumbling against the relentless onslaught of the Atlantic Ocean. It appears that the effects of sea level rise are already here, and, as a region, we need to put high priority on long term Coastal Zone Management. In an integrated manner our regional approach should include the following:*

1. An integrated marine and coastal zone policy which takes into account those island activities which also impact on the marine and coastal environment;

2. The promotion of the implementation of intersectoral plans and programmes through enhanced coordination between agencies and/or sectors at the national and regional levels;
3. Development and/or strengthening, as appropriate, of the capabilities of research institutions to support development and preparation of intersectoral plans;
4. Promotion of joint regional efforts to find innovative ways of management of exclusive economic zone resources and specifically the pooling of capabilities to manage fisheries;
5. Promotion of regional efforts to monitor effectively coastlines, territorial waters and exclusive economic zones. Monitoring should include the biological and physical aspects and activities such as damaging and non-sustainable fishing practices.

Another important issue for the CARICOM States is waste disposal. Modernisation and accompanying consumerism have increased both the quantity and types of solid waste and much of the waste is non-biodegradable. Tourism, one of our main economic activities, also increases the volume of waste that we must deal with. Collectively, we face problems that relate to disposal sites, management and technical capabilities and financing.

In our sub-region, the OECS secretariat, in collaboration with the World Bank, is in the preparatory phase of a proposed Solid Waste Management Project aimed at addressing major deficiencies in the solid waste disposal sector, including those problems related to ship and shore-generated waste. There is also a programme now under consideration from the wider Caribbean. The Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), with the collaboration of the German Technical Agency (GTZ), has been implementing a project aimed at improving landfill sites in two OECS countries – Dominica and Saint Lucia. Mr. President, these are small initiatives for which we thank the international community for assistance in these areas. However, we need to forge greater regional and international partnerships in support of the development of comprehensive national solid waste management strategies, including options for effective collection, transportation and disposal, and guidelines on reducing, recycling and re-using of waste materials.

Mr. President, the Caribbean community also places great importance in preserving the integrity of the Caribbean Sea.

The waters of the Caribbean Sea are highly exposed to the possibilities of ship-generated marine pollution, or to the dumping of wastes originating outside of the region. In part, the vulnerability of the Caribbean Sea stems from its semi-

enclosed nature and the limited flushing capacity of its prevailing currents. This natural vulnerability is heightened by the important role of the Caribbean Sea as a major international transit route. Some of the cargo transiting the Caribbean Sea are of a toxic nature and include various chemical and hazardous materials, petroleum products and nuclear materials. The Caribbean Sea is at the same time the world's leading centre for cruise tourism. The transit of nuclear material has emerged as a major threat with the increased level of activity between certain countries in Europe and Japan.

We need to strengthen the appropriate institutions, such as the Commonwealth Caribbean Ocean Services Network, to deal with these issues.

Mr. President, we are happy to note that a Programme of Action has been agreed to in the spirit of UNCED. We must note however that Agenda 21 is being implemented at a slow pace and in some aspects, not at all. We hope that the SIDS Action Programme will be implemented in a much more dynamic way.

A major constraint to the implementation of the Action Programme of sustainable development is the lack of resources in developing countries. These include infrastructural, technological, financial and human resources, and so we are disappointed that there has not been greater commitment by the countries more endowed with the means of assisting. Even the amounts which had been committed by OECD countries have not been forthcoming.

Mr. President, there is a connecting thread between growing poverty, growing unemployment, hunger, population growth and degradation of the environment.

***Developing countries can only proceed along the guidelines set out in the Action Programme and indeed in Agenda 21 for sustainable development if they are freed from the huge debt burden. The Commonwealth Caribbean territories are overburdened by debt with high debt service ratios.***

Sir Neville Nicholls, President of the Caribbean development Bank (CDB), estimates that one third of the population of the Commonwealth Caribbean is living in poverty. Sir Neville told a two day regional consultation on poverty reduction that in the 1970's there had been "a general improvement in living standards of the broad masses," due to "rapid expansion in public expenditure on social services, such as health and education." However, since the 1980's many countries had been unable to sustain this level of spending because of "adverse external events, inadequate or negative growth, chronic balance of payments, budget deficits", and debt service difficulties.

In Guyana, debt payments, amounting to 80% of our state current revenues,

imperil our attempts at attaining sustainable development of our natural and human resources, alleviating poverty and protecting the environment and our indigenous Amerindian people.

Imagine our predicament. We are told that we must create a favorable investment climate for economic development. But some of our aid donors tell us that we should not give foreign investors concessions for mining and forestry development until we have proper monitoring facilities in the Forestry Commission and the Geology and Mines Commission. However, because of the huge debt payments, we cannot afford adequate salaries to attract and maintain personnel in the public service or the material resources to monitor our vast forest region. Nor do we have enough money for health, education and poverty alleviation.

*If the debt pressure is removed, small island developing states in particular and developing countries in general will be able to work rapidly to achieve sustainability.*

Unfortunately, as a result of the continuing, cyclical and structural socio-economic crisis, recession, stagnation, budgetary fiscal problems and increasing poverty and unemployment in the industrial Northern countries, development assistance is being cut, instead of being increased.

An answer must be found to resolve the dilemma: on the one hand, the inability in the developed countries to harness the advanced means of modernized production for accelerated growth; and, on the other, the innumerable constraints preventing sustainable growth in the developing countries - a dilemma which is grinding out more unemployment, poverty and hunger in both the developed and developing states.

Mr. President, science and technology must be harnessed in the service of man. The scientists say that it is possible to halve the incidence of hunger by the end of this decade. We, in both the North and the South, in a spirit of genuine partnership and co-operation must demonstrate the political will to rescue our endangered planet.

One way to garner additional financial resources is accelerated cuts in arms expenditure, and the utilization of saving - the peace dividend – for:

1. Debt relief and other forms of assistance to the developing countries particularly the small island developing states; and
2. In the developed countries, a shorter working week and lower retirement age without loss of pay and benefits and a Works Program as under the Roosevelt New Deal administration during the depression of the 1930's.

Additionally, while we pursue a policy of national and collective self-reliance, we must work for the sharing of resources by SIDS. We must insist, in our interdependent world on genuine cooperation; we must strive for an international climate favourable to the creation of a New Global Humanitarian Order.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I welcome the unity demonstrated by the AOSIS group in the negotiations, and wish to state that AOSIS should continue to have a strong coordinating mechanism for implementation of our decisions.

The Programme of Action we are adopting must become a stimulus for genuine partnership to achieve Sustainable Development. Real assistance to Small Island Development States is a necessary contribution to the preservation of our planet as a whole.

Address by  
**His Excellency President, Dr Cheddi Jagan**  
**at the Awards Ceremony for Environment Competitions**  
**On World Environment Day**

**June 5, 1994**

Chairman

Distinguished Visitors

Prime Minister

Other Ministers of the Government

Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Ladies and Gentlemen

Students

Today we are joining with people the world over to celebrate World Environment Day. This gives us an opportunity to reflect on the effects of human activity on the environment at local, national and global levels.

Here in Guyana, I am pleased to note that we have been observing not only this day but the entire week. I am sure that the activities during Eco Week will contribute significantly to an increase in awareness and participation of broad sections of Guyanese in issues related to the protection of our environment.

Ever since the idea of the United National Conference on Environment and Development was mooted, there was a welcome upsurge of interest in the process of sustainable development. Numerous definitions and explanations have been attempted. But for us the main principle is applicable universally: that the natural resources of our planet must be utilised for the benefit of mankind in such a way that they remain available for future generations, and that in the process of utilisation, fullest measures are taken to prevent environmental degradation.

Sustainable Development is an all embracing process which is centered on human development. There are two major needs which have to be satisfied. One is to use natural resources for the material and spiritual upliftment of all people. The other is to maintain the delicate balance in nature reflected in the various eco systems adorning our planet.

*The Government of Guyana has an unwavering commitment to the protection of our natural environment. Towards this end, in the middle of Eco Week, the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) was laid in Parliament. This plan reflects our seriousness to ensure that all areas of activity in Guyana be governed in a*

***responsible manner, with all participants contributing fully to the maintenance of the highest environmental standards.***

The NEAP recognises the linkage between economic decline and poverty and between poverty and the environment.

Sometime ago it was mooted that development creates destruction of the environment, but now it is recognised clearly that it is poverty which is endangering the environment. The NEAP states: “The protracted economic decline Guyana experienced in the 1970s and 1980s was accompanied by an intensification of poverty in the society . . .

“To some extent the standard poverty-environment link exists in Guyana. The most obvious examples are the cutting of trees for charcoal and the reaping of mangroves for household use and cottage industry (tanning). It has also found expression in the way the gold mining industry has developed . . .

“The more telling poverty-environment link, however, is to be found in the impact of the poverty of the state on environmental degradation. The sharp decline in fiscal viability associated with the economic crisis led to a severe deterioration of the social and economic infrastructure, with grave consequences for environmental health and protection . . .

“With ever fewer financial and manpower resources, the capacity to maintain and expand the social infrastructure eroded. The financial constraints at the Government and City Council levels have, over time, led to a near total collapse on the vital infrastructure for protecting the population from the sea, disposing of waste and providing social services. The evidence of collapse of the social and economic infrastructure is everywhere - in the sea defence breaches and their consequences, the malfunctioning of the drainage and irrigation systems, the breakdown of the management of solid and liquid waste, the deterioration in water supply and electricity systems, the unavailability of affordable housing and consequent rise in squatting.”

The NEAP, while paying attention to the sources of environmental problems and the specific manifestation of these, goes a far way in pointing out the measures that are necessary in order to achieve the high levels of environmental protection. The plan also highlights the constraints in pursuing these objectives where it says;

“An effective programme of environmental protection in a country with severe poverty, paucity of data, effective institutions and trained people, and competition for scarce talent from the private sector, will take time to build up. The new Government is currently struggling with intractable social and

economic issues and will be unable to design and administer, let alone finance, a complex environmental protection programme without considerable external assistance".

Herein lies our dilemma. We are unable to overcome these hurdles because of the limited finances available. This is largely due to the huge debt burden which consumes 80 per cent of our state revenues and about 60 per cent of foreign earnings. Attempts to increase earnings from expanded production are being viewed in terms of our ability to monitor such operations.

We have to break this vicious cycle by a virtuous circle. Meaningful debt relief will allow us to take significant steps to improve our overall ability to develop in a sustainable way.

*A clear example is in the forestry sector. Because of the numerous deficiencies of the Forestry Commission, the Government has put on hold a number of applications for timber concessions. These could have been major income earners. But the Government has decided to work towards the strengthening of the Forestry Commission and the development of clear management plans which the strengthened Commission will have to supervise. This type of commitment on our part needs to be fortified through debt relief which will give us some scope to carry out the task of strengthening the Commission.*

The National Environment Action Plan indicates that an Environmental Protection Act will shortly be presented in Parliament. This Act will make provision for the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It is Government's intention that this body will receive the necessary financial, material and human resources assistance in order to function effectively.

The establishment of the Environmental Studies Unit at the University of Guyana is a very timely development. We wish to thank the European Community for this great contribution. Government will give all assistance possible to strengthen this Unit to enable it to rapidly train personnel for environmental monitoring and enforcement in all areas of activity. Special attention needs to be paid to the training of indigenous people who already have the ground knowledge, which is vital for success.

Through the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, an overall review of the land titles and land right of the Amerindian people will be made to ensure that they have proper access to natural resources and full scope for development.

The Iwokrama Rain Forest Programme is gaining ground. The temporary camp site facilities have been developed and some members of the Interim Programme Management Group have taken up their positions in Guyana. The programme

offers great scope for a proper study in a practical way of the sustainable use of forestry resources -- a study that can be of immense value to the people of Guyana and the world at large.

*The commitment of the Government of Guyana to the protection of the environment has led to the decision to expand the Kaieteur National Park to include the watershed landing into the fall. We are currently considering proposals to create a protected area in the Kanuku mountains. And on a broader scale, efforts are now being directed to design a system of National Parks and Protected Areas for the country.*

Environmental protection is everybody's business. Its level of achievement depends on the level of participation of all groups in society.

I wish to make a special appeal firstly, to those who are involved in different areas of economic life. Government is seriously trying to improve conditions to allow for increased production. We are facilitating efforts by big and small entrepreneurs to enter into new areas of production. Each activity has potential for environmental degradation, and monitoring and enforcement are very costly exercises.

I call therefore on all miners, foresters, industrialists, and industrial workers, farmers and agricultural workers, artisans, businessmen and consumers to exercise a high level of self regulation in the course of your day to day activities. Your conscious effort will reduce the need for high levels of expenditure on policing efforts. Like the old popular song, I ask you "Always let your conscience be your guide."

I also wish to appeal to the residents of all communities - urban and rural, coastal and interior, - to take pride in keeping your surroundings clean and beautiful. Community Development Councils, Community Policing Groups and other community organisations and civic bodies can play a crucial role in ensuring proper systems of garbage disposal and maintenance of clean parapets and clean drains and trenches. Such efforts will in the first place benefit you, your children and those around you. Small conscious action when duplicated in each individual will bring results of very great proportions.

To those entrusted with the task of protecting our environment, I wish to re-emphasise the seriousness of your responsibility. Government is fully conscious of the limitations in human and material resources and will strive to improve these with maximum speed.

In the meantime, there is much to be achieved through organised links with the various groups in society. Your experiences in the drafting of the National Environmental Action Plan and the preparation of the Eco Fair 94 should

serve as a great lesson on the effectiveness of the broad-based consultative and participatory approach.

I wish to congratulate the NGO's, both local and foreign, the representatives of business and trade union organisations, the professional and social groups and those government officials and individuals who have been working together on environmental issues. Maintain, expand and intensify your collective efforts, for this is the only way in which environmental protection will in the long run be guaranteed.

Effective environmental protection results from several levels of activity. The outer limits lie on the one hand in rigid enforcement and on the other in sound education and public awareness.

Government will insist that wherever necessary, firm actions be taken to deal with violations of environmental laws and regulations. It is hoped that the Environmental Protection Act will update and strengthen these laws and regulations and that the Environmental Protection Agency will deal fearlessly with violators.

Enforcement, however, will be difficult if not impossible without a comprehensive programme of public awareness. It is therefore very heartening for us to be here today to participate in this prize-giving ceremony to honour the winners of the competitions held for World Environment Day 1994. I congratulate all those who participated and I give special praise to those who have been declared winners. I urge you to continue ever onwards. Use all opportunities available, the schools, the print media, the radio and television to spread the gospel of Environmental Protection.

**Message from  
His Excellency President Dr Cheddi Jagan  
in honour of Energy Week 1994**

**E**nergy is one of the most vital physical needs of humanity. In our world, people's access to sources of energy is a crucial factor in the development of nations.

The industrial revolution was a very important juncture in world history, because of the decisive manner in which it allowed some countries to advance and caused others to fall into varying states of dependency. In this division, those who controlled the traditional sources of energy became dominant.

Guyana, like so many other developing countries has been a victim of this dependence which was intensified by centuries of colonial bondage. We have not been able to strike oil, although being in the geographical neighbourhood of three significant oil producers. Yet at the same time, our consumption habits are generally oil (petroleum) based.

Electricity in every home and factory is an assumed service crucial to essential processes as well as for devices for comfort and luxury. And most of the electricity we generate is oil based. Our transportation services - motor cycles, cars, buses, trucks, boats or aeroplanes are also oil based. So too are our instruments of production whether in manufacturing, construction or agriculture.

The result is that Guyana consumes annually petroleum products imported at a cost of over US\$60 million. When we take our fuel bill and add it to our debt payments we arrive at the impossible situation where imports eat up most of our export earnings.

While serious attempts are being made to reduce drastically our debt and to increase our exports, drastic reduction in our oil import bill must be vigorously pursued if we are to improve significantly our country.

***For Government, this is a top priority. A team of top officials in the energy sector worked for several months on a complete review of the energy sector and made recommendations for a new thrust in the satisfaction of Guyana's energy needs. I am happy to say that Cabinet has recently approved of a national energy plan which places emphasis on a rapid shift towards the utilisation of renewable sources of energy.***

Indeed, steps have already been taken in this direction. Discussions are going on with potential investors for the development of a major hydropower station

and for the utilisation of bagasse at sugar estates to produce electricity. When completed, these projects will make a meaningful contribution to the reduction of our dependence on imported fuel.

Meanwhile, efforts are also being made to develop mini and micro hydropower stations and small units on locations at rice mills and sawmills to utilise their industrial waste to generate electricity.

Government is also prepared to support efforts by the business community to develop all feasible ventures for the utilisation of renewable sources of energy. Solar power and wind power can be put to a wide range of uses. The initial capital cost is often a discouragement although the long term benefits are compensatory.

The Institute of Applied Science and Technology and the Energy Authority have been given the task of identifying simple and low cost devices and to popularise them among all Guyanese. The lending institutions are expected to play their part also in helping interested customers to acquire such devices.

Renewable sources of energy are not only a source of balance of payments improvement, but also are more environmentally friendly than the use of fossil fuels. There is therefore an added incentive for us to pursue very seriously these alternative forms.

A few days ago, when I opened the 5th Caricom Regional Science, Technology and Mathematics Fair, I saw several very innovative displays by the students, some of whom are still in primary school. These included very simple arrangements for the use of alternative sources of energy. I hope that the IAST and entrepreneurs can use this inspiration from our younger generation to duplicate their efforts on a commercial scale.

Another lesson from the students of the Caribbean was the need to save on energy. Energy conservation is the other major plank of our national energy policy. Too much energy is being wasted on a daily basis. In homes and offices, unnecessary lights, air conditioners, fans, etc. not only increase the individual expenditure but also pushes up the national fuel bill. The same goes for transportation. Because of the huge increase in the number of buses and taxis on our roads, there is a large under-utilisation of individual vehicles.

We must not do things because we can personally afford to do so even if there is massive waste. We must think of the plight of the less fortunate and the country at large. Energy saved means dollars saved; dollars saved means greater and faster development.

Government is doing all it can to make the lives of Guyanese more comfortable. And this includes the improvement of our electricity service. You will recall the miserable situation my government inherited. Special efforts have been made to upgrade this service. Repairs have been done and new units have been put in place. Isolated areas have or are about to receive electricity.

We want to satisfy all of the nation's needs. We do not have the means of doing so immediately. But we can reduce the wait by saving on material financial resources. I urge you on World energy Day, 1994 to safeguard and encourage the gains we are making.

Use energy wisely!

**Opening of the  
5th Caricom Regional Science,  
Technology and Mathematics Fair**

August 16, 1994

Madame Chairperson  
Honourable Minister of Education  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Other Distinguished Visitors  
Students  
Friends

It is for me a great pleasure to be associated with the 5th CARICOM Regional Science, Technology and Mathematics Fair.

The holding of the Fair on four previous occasions in different CARICOM countries represents a very positive trend in the efforts of educators in the region to promote this important field of study for our student at various levels.

Our world today is characterised by rapid advances in science and technology, while poverty, hunger and decay assume more alarming proportions in the countries of the developing world. The developed countries have run through, over the years, various wonderful revolutions -- industrial revolutions, productivity revolutions and management revolutions. In the Third World, unfortunately, these things have passed us by and as I said, we have increasing poverty, hunger and decay all around us.

It is possible, the scientists tell us, to halve poverty by the end of this decade and perhaps to eradicate it completely in another 25 to 30 years. Science and Technology have that capacity. Regrettably the will is not there - perhaps at the political and other levels.

It is therefore incumbent on us to prepare ourselves first of all, as students to advance our knowledge. Knowledge is equally important as capital and labour, Capital, it is said, is dead labour. Labour, to become more productive, needs the acquisition of more and more knowledge - scientific knowledge. In this regard, the intellectual is very important - the intellectual who becomes a specialist and focuses on words and ideas (the so-called "knowledge people"). We need more and more specialists in all fields of endeavour.

But we do not only need specialists, especially those who become specialised in very narrow fields. What we need are people who can see the "whole picture".

We need to have basic questions, values, beliefs and vision. We need to put all of that together to see that the society develops in such a way that we can give real meaning to life. In this regard, we have the capacity today, to go to the moon by the advance of science and technology and knowledge. Regrettably as I said, we have not been able to harness this knowledge - this science and technology - in the service of man.

Consequently, we find in the Northern and Southern countries, gaps are widening between the rich and the poor. But more regrettably, the gap between the peoples in the North and in the South is ever widening and it is therefore incumbent on us to prepare ourselves so that we can cope with the challenges which are facing us -- especially the young people who are graduating from school and colleges and universities who are looking not only for employment but to build a better future for themselves.

Of course, the origins of our plight lie in our colonial past when our resources were plundered and we remained underdeveloped. A development Agenda, therefore, is very vital at this present time. Otherwise, the gaps that I talked about will continue to widen and the plight of the poor, the underprivileged and the downtrodden will become even greater.

In the Caribbean, regrettably, we see some decline. We see even advances that we have made have been lost especially in some fields of industrialisation. In this so-called "global village", we have to compete with the North, with the most modern methods of production -- computers and robots. But not only that, we have to compete today with South-East Asia, which is called the "miracle area" in terms of growth. There, we have to compete with highly skilled labour, we have to compete with huge populations giving the advantage of economies of scale.

Here we are in the Caribbean -- small numbers of people with an in-between position so far as wages and standards of living are concerned -- not being as advanced as the people in the North, not being as competitive as the people in the Far East and therefore our future depends on you -- the youths and students.

Our future depends on you to the extent that we can master science and technology, that we can apply mathematics to science and technology. That we can have the vision to see that science and technology is used in the service of man not to make man become dependent and poverty-stricken. It is this mission that you the young people will have to take on to provide not only the means, the science and technology but the vision, the understanding of the theory of historical development, the theory of society and its development.

All these are equally important -- to combine natural science and social science and to combine knowledge with good managers. Knowledge based on the intel-

lectual capacity of the individual and the society and good managers so that we can put together whatever knowledge we have acquired to so manage people and manage circumstances that we can solve the problems which are before us. That is, to have high economic growth but at the same time to ensure, as we politicians have to do, that there is social justice and equal justice, that there is human development and not having growth only where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

In Guyana, the Government is placing greater emphasis on improving the education sector generally. A larger percentage of the national budget is now being allocated to education. In the 60s, we spent nearly 30 per cent of our budget on social services. Last year, we increased the amount from 8 per cent - to which it had descended - to 14 per cent. Our intention is to pay special attention to the improvement of the skills of teachers and education tools and learning aids. This year we paid teachers an increase in salaries amounting to over 100 per cent. The priority in this area is the training of science teachers and rehabilitation and equipping of science laboratories.

There is also at the same time the need for a popularisation of these subjects. Too many students have a tendency to shy away from mathematics and science subjects because they consider them to be somewhat mysterious and very difficult to follow and pass at examinations. Regrettably, at our university, only about 10% to 15% of our students are graduating in the field of Natural Science.

Our educators in the region should work on the preparation of video films, etc., to reach out to students at different levels.

Your Science, Technology and Mathematics Fair can be used as a source of inspiration to students throughout the region.

There should also be a good documentary film made of all the exhibits on display and field trips that have been made. This should be made available to TV stations to be shown to the public and for schools to be used with VCRs to all students.

As another follow-up, science clubs should be encouraged in all schools and communities. And these should be assisted by the relevant education authorities and given financial assistance by industries and commercial ventures.

I note that the theme of this year's fair is "Science and Technology in the Environment".

The protection of our environment is a task for our entire population. The slogan "The Environment an Us" is most appropriate. We are all involved in

this responsibility. Environmental awareness must begin in our schools. The development of proper attitudes at an early age is very important for influencing society's norms in later years. But there can also be immediate effects. Children's behaviour can influence parents and other adults to pay attention to the protection of the environment. Bread is essential for life, food is essential for life, but so is a clean and healthy environment -- the air we breathe, the water we drink and the environment in which we live.

Environmental Clubs in schools should be encouraged in a similar way to Science Clubs or be linked with them where appropriate. We need to ensure that everywhere in the region, activities be followed-up to ensure that the gains achieved can be protected and multiplied.

I wish to congratulate the organisers of this Regional Science, Technology and Mathematics Fair and express deep admiration for the efforts of the students of varying ages from the participating states of the region.

I sincerely hope that your contributions will be fully recognised and will serve as an inspiration to students throughout the region.

It is with the greatest pleasure that I declare open this 5th CARICOM Regional Science, Technology and Mathematics Fair.

Address by  
**His Excellency President Dr Cheddi Jagan**  
**at the Opening of the Annual General Meeting**  
**of the Caribbean Conservation Association**  
August 23, 1994

**O**n behalf of the Government and People of Guyana, I bid a special welcome to our country to all participants of the 28th Annual General Meeting of the Caribbean Conservation Association.

You are meeting in a very exciting period of environmental development in the Caribbean. The Global Conference of Small Island Developing States which was held in April/May of this year provided an opportunity for a sharing of views on several important questions related to the sustainable development not only of island states but of developing countries as a whole.

The road to SIDS was very instructive for our Caribbean countries. After much discussion, we were able to work out a common regional position. This was later developed into a unified position of the AOSIS countries which gained the full support of the Group of 77 and China.

The negotiations which followed were very difficult. The needs of the developing countries though clearly and strongly expressed were not readily addressed by the developed world. The result is that the Final Agreement of SIDS presents a very comprehensive picture of what is required for the movement towards the sustainable development of our developing states but fails to identify a full commitment by the developed countries to give the levels of assistance which are necessary for us to achieve our objectives.

*Two major lessons are obvious. The first is that whatever gains we made resulted from the high level of unity displayed by the developing countries. Without that unity, the concessions we got would have been much less. We must therefore recognise the need to maintain the greatest unity in our approach to all questions of a global nature.*

*The second lesson is that there is a limit we should place on our expectations of assistance from the developed countries. For several reasons, the levels of aid will not be any way near to what our countries need. We therefore have to look among ourselves to help one another.*

Our Caribbean region must begin in a very serious way to pool our resources, carry out common exercises and give support to each other in our struggle to cope in a highly competitive world market.

I have pointed out before that less than 10 per cent of the imports of all CARICOM countries are bought from within the region. Market forces and recognition of individual tastes should be given a regional flavour. In a Caribbean where tourism is dominant and where furniture is a major input, why should most of these be

brought from outside when Guyana, for instance, we can satisfy all the furniture needs of the region at a very high quality? We have a similar situation with food and beverages.

Sustainable development of the countries of our region is based on several conditions being met. What these are and how they apply in specific cases is the subject of continuing debate. In the course of this debate critical dilemmas are emerging.

In Guyana, a deep socio-economic crisis had developed in the latter part of the decade of the seventies. This was characterised by huge budgetary and balance of payments deficits. Agreements with the International Monetary Fund have placed strong requirements on the government to ensure that certain measures of economic growth are maintained.

To maintain a growth of the economy at a rate of 6 per cent per year, new investments have to be encouraged on an ongoing basis. Guyana's greatest potential for growth lies in the forestry sector. Investors are knocking at our doors. But lending agencies and potential donors have made clear their disagreement with an expansion of our forest sector because of the weakness of our administrative, monitoring and enforcement agencies.

The Guyana Government is committed to the ideals of sustainable development. We are not prepared to allow anyone to ravage our forests. We are working to improve our capacity to protect our environment. But to do so we need resources - human, material and financial.

Our fundamental problem is financial. The present administration inherited a foreign debt of over 2 billion US dollars. About 75 per cent of our current revenues go towards foreign and local debt payments. Very little is left for development needs.

Discussions with International institutions for assistance in various fields have yielded and are yielding some results. However, the extent of such assistance will not allow us decisively to break out of the vicious circle in which we are entrapped.

We are therefore preparing a more dynamic programme which will seek to supplement the assistance from international lending and donor agencies with direct payments from investors for the strengthening of administrative, monitoring and enforcement agencies in the natural resources sector.

The dilemma of countries like Guyana requires that maximum support be given to the efforts of these countries by regional and national organisations. We look to the Caribbean Conservation Association to play a critical role in mobilising Caribbean public opinion in support of our efforts for debt reduction and write-offs.

I was highly impressed at the SIDS conference with the role of the NGO's which

was co-ordinated by the Caribbean Conservation Association. The NGO's made very vocal demands for a people oriented programme. I fully agree that development in the first place is about people and sustainability parameters must always be considered with people's welfare as the top priority.

So long as the debt burden continues, people's basic needs cannot be met. And as we are seeing all around us, poverty is a major cause of environmental degradation.

If money cannot be found for the creation of respectable living wages and essential services, it is hardly likely that budgetary allocation can be made for projects to protect the environment. It is therefore a necessary condition for effective environmental protection that countries be free of the strangulation caused by their massive debt payment requirements.

For the sake of genuine sustainable human development, a crusade must be launched for the removal of the debt burdens of developing countries. And I wish to call on the Caribbean Conservation Association to take an active lead in this effort in the Caribbean.

With our limited resources, the region needs to tackle environmental issues in a collective way. The University of the West Indies, the University of Guyana, the research institutes, professional bodies and NGO's need to cooperate meaningfully by sharing experts and experiences for the mutual benefit of all. The region has within it an abundance of skills. They need to be properly harnessed and made to work for the good of the Caribbean people.

In Guyana, in spite of our difficulties, we are making a strong effort to protect our environment. The National Environmental Action Plan was approved by the Parliament in June. The Environmental Protection Act is expected to be placed before Parliament when it resumes in October and immediately after its passage, the Environmental Protection Agency will be established.

We shall require assistance in many areas and we look forward to the Caribbean Conservation Association and other institutions and the experts in the region to support us in our efforts.

Caribbean participation will also be expected in the Iwokrama Rain Forest Programme. It is likely that by the end of this year, a medium-term programme would be adopted and the research programmes would be clearly identified. We look forward to a significant Caribbean participation in this very valuable international programme.

The road ahead is a hard one for the Caribbean people. But we can reduce the pressures by our collective efforts. Let us face the future with unity and determination.

I take great pleasure in declaring open this 28th Annual General Meeting of the Caribbean Conservation Association.

## **Speech at inauguration of the Iwokrama Board of Trustees**

I wish to thank all members of this new Iwokrama Board for agreeing to serve, and to wish our overseas based members and other participants a special welcome to Guyana.

The Iwokrama International Rainforest Programme is at a very important and critical stage. The interim phase has been completed. Our parliament has enacted legislation to give the programme legal status. The base camp has been developed to accommodate researchers. Several base-line studies have been completed and the Iwokrama 2000 five years Operational Plan has been developed.

For these and other successes, I wish to thank the Chairman Professor Swaminathan and other members of the Interim Board of Trustees for their splendid efforts. I am indeed very happy that Professor Swaminathan has accepted the invitation to continue as the Chairman of the New Board.

I wish to thank also the Interim Director General and his staff for the great work they have done and the many local institutions and organisation for their important contributions.

In 1995, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting I joined the Commonwealth Secretary General in signing the Agreement on which the Programme is based. I wish to thank the Secretary General for his keen interest and efforts in moving the Programme forward and also those members of his staff who have contributed.

The achievements which have been made so far would not have been possible without the financial assistance provided by the Global Environment Facility and I express my gratitude to the G.E.F. for their support and the UNDP for the part they have played. The timely inputs of the IDRC of Canada and the University of the West Indies Centre for Environment and Development are also worthy of praise. Of course there are any others who have helped significantly and although I cannot here list them all, I would like them to know that their contributions are highly appreciated.

The Government and people of Guyana have offered the one million acres of pristine rainforest to demonstrate methods of sustainable management of tropical forests. We are providing for the international community an open laboratory to investigate the ways in which our forests can be used to improve the living standards of our present generation while they remain available for future generations.

Having made this site available to the International Centre, Guyana expects that the new Board will work seriously to attain the results for which this sizeable portion of our forest was provided.

The Interim Board has developed the ideal of the programme in a well thought-out mission statement and the objectives which are contained in the five core programmes. My Government shares the sentiments expressed in the Mission Statement: “to promote the conservation and the sustainable and equitable use of tropical rainforests in a manner that will lead to lasting ecological, economic and social benefits to the people of Guyana and to the world in general by undertaking research training and the development and dissemination of technologies.”

Your board must always be guided by this mission statement. We have no doubts that our forest can provide lasting ecological, economic and social benefits to the people of Guyana and the world at large. The question is “HOW” and we expect Iwokrama to give us the answers.

The three central programmes of sustainable management of forests, conservation and utilisation of biodiversity and sustainable human development must be supported with sufficient financial and material resources in order to be successful. The two cross-cutting programmes of forest research and information and communication must be developed rapidly since they are considered as the tools necessary to carry out the 3 central programmes.

As members of the Board, you must vigorously pursue the support of donors. The International community needs to understand the significance and potential of Iwokrama in order to give their support. Guyanese will be greatly disappointed if the programme is affected by a lack of donor support. The noble objectives of Iwokrama must be backed by generous contributions from donors throughout the world.

The government of Guyana has a firm commitment to pursue the path of sustainable development nationally and to contribute globally to the protection of our planet. But we are constrained by our grave state of under-development and our huge debt burden. We need to break out of these constraints in order to develop sustainably. And this requires a new global human order.

Guyana is approaching the Iwokrama Programme as a genuine partnership between Guyana and the International community. In the Agreement and the Act of Parliament, provisions are made to allow the Centre to function independently and to receive special privileges and benefits. We expect in return that the Centre will operate in a manner that recognises the laws, customs and practices in Guyana and treats Guyanese citizens and institutions with respect and dignity.

I hope that your Board at this Inaugural meeting will establish guidelines and mechanisms for the functioning of the Centre which will satisfy the interests of both Guyana and International Community and ensure maximum coordination.

In a number of public discussions here in Guyana, the Interim Board of Trustees gave assurance to Guyanese on several areas of concern such as:

- the full involvement of Guyanese researchers
- compensation for the use of indigenous knowledge
- continued access to the site to indigenous people for their traditional practices
- national ownership of Guyana's biodiversity and other natural resources and
- the contribution of Iwokrama to local capacity building and institutional strengthening.

Broad national support for the Iwokrama Programme generally and the Parliamentary motion in particular developed on the basis of these assurances. My Government expects that your Board will ensure that the Centre honours these assurances.

I have great confidence that your Board will lead Iwokrama towards the successful achievement of its goals. Collectively, you have a wealth of knowledge, experience and dedicated service. I urge you to combine your efforts to work as a united team to realise the great objectives of Iwokrama.

Address by  
**His Excellency President Dr Cheddi Jagan**  
at the Opening Session of  
**the Caribbean Community Consultation in Preparation for  
the Hemispheric Summit on Sustainable Development**

September 23-24, 1996

I join my Minister of Foreign Affairs in welcoming all participants to this important Caribbean Community Consultation and to our foreign guests I bid a very special welcome to Guyana.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in June 1992 served as a catalyst for world wide acceptance of the need for mankind to pursue in all spheres of human activity the path of sustainable development.

Since Rio, numberless international, regional and national conferences, workshops and seminars have been held to advance this noble objective.

The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States held in Barbados in April-May 1994 sought to address the particular needs of small island and low lying coastal developing states.

At the Summit of the Americas in Miami in December 1994, governments of the hemisphere pledged to "guarantee sustainable development and conserve our natural environment for future generations" and agreed with the holding of a summit specifically on sustainable development in the Americas. We are happy that the government of Bolivia has agreed to host this summit on December 8 and 9.

This summit provides an opportunity for the countries of the Americas to jointly examine what progress has been made in implementing the plans set out in Agenda 21 which emerged from Rio. For us in the Caribbean, the conference also allows us to take stock of our progress in implementing also the SIDS Action Programme and to see how our hemispheric partners can help us to advance these programmes further.

I express my appreciation to my colleagues in CARICOM for asking me to coordinate regional inputs for the Bolivia Summit and to the Caricom Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Centre for Environment and Development (UWICED) for assisting in organising this technical consultation to clarify the issues and assist in developing common and coordinated approaches.

This examination of the state of progress towards sustainable development and how we can enhance that progress takes place also before a similar review which will take place globally at the United Nations in 1997 to consider what has been achieved since the Earth Summit.

I would emphasise, however, that the issue is not mainly one of a review of progress. The fact is that, because of the influence of the major countries, the Earth Summit concentrated on the environmental aspects of sustainable development and did not take the integrated view required by the concept. The wider development dimensions were largely ignored.

It is important therefore that we use the opportunity provided by Santa Cruz to move forward towards an integrated view and not leave out the wider issues of development, which are particularly crucial to our region.

For Latin America and the Caribbean, as it was for Sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the developing world, the 1980's was a "lost decade". The 1990's are showing some better results in a few countries, but great uncertainty remains. Many countries are undergoing structural reform but the trickle-down process is not working.

My own view is that much more will have to be done to improve policies nationally, regionally and internationally if our region is to get out of its difficulties. And these are indeed immense. This remains one of the regions with the greatest inequality in the world, and that inequality is increasing, as it is in other parts of the developing world, and even in the industrial world.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the percentage of households below the poverty line increased in the 1980's from 35 per cent to 39 per cent and, poverty is largely urban - 63 percent of poor households are urban dwellers. According to ECLAC, during the early 1990's the "incidence of poverty remained alarmingly persistent." While some countries succeeded in reducing it considerably, poverty levels in general continued to be higher than before the (economic) crisis and, in most cases, growth rates alone have been insufficient to bring about significant reductions."

The particularly worrying feature of Latin American and Caribbean poverty is the extent to which it affects children, women and indigenous peoples. Of the 165 million poor in the region, 35 per cent are below the age of 15. Almost 65 per cent of all children are poor and one-third of them belong to the poorest 20 per cent of all households.

Indigenous peoples are the most impoverished of the poor in Latin America. This is true also for Guyana. According to a recent World Bank study "Indigenous

Peoples and Poverty in Latin America”, in Bolivia while 50 per cent of the population are below the poverty line, 64 per cent of the indigenous people live below that line. It would therefore be extremely difficult to avoid confronting the issues of poverty in Santa Cruz, where statistics would not be required to prove the point.

In Guatemala, the situation is worse. Whereas 66 per cent of the population live in poverty, 87 per cent of the indigenous people fall in that category. In Peru, similarly, 79 per cent of the indigenous people are poor, compared to 50 per cent for the whole population.

And behind poverty of course is the important issue of unemployment and underemployment. Open unemployment alone, which does not include the large numbers of underemployed people, is high. A perspective ECLAC study for 1965 - 1995 predicted a 50 per cent increase in unemployment at the end of the period.

The issue of poverty and inequality is a global one and deserves to become more prominent in the international agenda. We face the obscene statistic today that 358 billionaires in the world earn more than 45 per cent of the people in developing countries.

*It is clear that the task is large. We cannot deal with the environment without also including development. Many industrial countries would like these sustainable development conferences to concentrate narrowly on the environment. We must continue to endeavour to treat sustainable development as the more central concern. In development, we have to concentrate not only on growth. That would not be sustainable, both in an environmental sense and in a social sense. We need to include also issues of equity, urban sprawl, personal security, violence, corruption, environmental degradation, pervasive poverty, deterioration and physical infrastructure and governance.*

Sustainable development must include issues of governance. Democracy needs to be strengthened and deepened. A greater decentralisation of power is needed, and this calls not only for strengthening local government but also for encouraging NGOs and community-based organisations. Decentralised government empowers people and ensures greater attention to their interests and wider use of their local knowledge. It assists community development and cooperation and thus improves social capital. Sustainable development also means therefore participatory development.

Some of these problems are so long with us in the region that we have begun to regard them as endemic. But we cannot despair. While we cannot concentrate on all fronts at the same time, we cannot afford to postpone environmental as

well as the equity issues. Our approach has to be strategic. And sustainability has to be the main objective from the beginning.

The Summit on Sustainable Development in Americas must be seen not as a one-off affair. It must be the beginning of a sustainable progress in our Hemisphere.

It must not focus only on national issues and approaches. It must be concerned with regional, hemispheric and international policies which would complement and support national efforts. It must be the beginning of an on-going dialogue on issues of sustainable development in the widest sense. And it must not also be only a dialogue. Hemispheric consultations must be backed with hemispheric and regional actions at hemispheric, regional and sub-regional institutions. The Organisation of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Association of Caribbean States, the Caribbean Development Bank. Caricom, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, the University of the West Indies Centre for Environment and Development (UWICED), the Caribbean Council for Science, Technology and other regional and national institutions must all become organised in a coordinated way in these efforts.

And these hemispheric efforts must be connected with other international actions such as the activities of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, UNEP and UNDP.

Your consultation, as well as other preparatory actions before the Summit, must seek to ensure that issues of particular interest to the Caribbean arising from smallness and island and coastal characteristics, our proneness to disasters, and our strong interest in protecting the Caribbean sea are all taken into account. I gather that the draft of the main document for Bolivia still does not reflect adequately Caribbean interests. You have much to do to help to change the situation.

Guyana has been in the forefront in advocating a Regional Development Fund and an international fund - the latter in the context of its proposal for A New Global Human Order. We must endeavour to incorporate the Hemisphere in this effort. We need in particular to press in Bolivia for support for the regional fund to assist with the special problems the region will face in adjustment in membership of the Free Trade Area of the Americas – FTAA - in achieving sustainable development as well as to the post Lome arrangements.

Our economies are islands or countries with large coastal zones. These face special sustainable development problems arising from their fragile coastal zones and their rich biodiversity. But being small, they are also fragile in an economic sense especially because of their narrow industrial sectors which have grown

up under protection and their narrow dependence on commodities such as sugar and bananas, which have developed through preferential arrangements. Both protection and preferences are now being eroded. We need time to adjust to these changes, but we also need enhanced financial support through new facilities such as the Regional and International Funds, and though existing financial institutions and arrangements such as the World Bank, the IDB, the Global Environment Facility and the Caribbean Development Bank and last but not least, through increased debt relief.

At Rio, Barbados and Miami, the developed countries made commitment to cooperate with developing countries to help them overcome barriers that prevent them from achieving the goals we set out in the various declarations. The Summit of the Americas Declaration of Principles states “To benefit future generations through environmental conservation, including the rational use of our ecosystems, natural resources and biological heritage, we will continue to pursue technological financial and other forms of cooperation.”

Unfortunately, the levels of cooperation in reality have not lived up to expectations. The countries with the advanced technologies and with the financial possibilities have not responded effectively.

We need, as representatives of our region, to ensure that the Bolivia Summit identifies steps to make cooperation more concrete, effective and implementable.

***We must ensure that the Bolivia Summit is not allowed to become a forum to produce just another Declaration and Plan and Action. We must as a Caribbean group take to the Summit a firm resolution to establish economic and social justice as a symbiotic partner of ecological justice.***

I wish you, dear friends, a very constructive and productive consultation and a very pleasant stay in Guyana.

Address by  
**His Excellency President Dr Cheddi Jagan**  
**At the Hemispheric Summit Conference**  
**on Sustainable Development**

Bolivia, December 7 - 8 , 1996

I express my sincerest gratitude to His Excellency President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozado and to the Government and People of Bolivia for the excellent conditions they have created for this historic hemispheric summit on Sustainable Development.

The holding of a special summit on Sustainable Development gives recognition to the critical importance of this concept to the fortunes of all our countries. We the participants are therefore saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that we leave here with results corresponding to the seriousness of our task.

We consider that Sustainable Development is an all-embracing approach to socioeconomic development. It is centered on the interaction of the economic and political, social and cultural and environmental features of global and national realities and goals.

This concept has gained increasing currency since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992.

Generally also, there has been much progress in developing special agreements, conventions and protocols on some of these principles.

A close examination, however, reveals that the implementation process leans heavily on the direction of the environmental issues with little emphasis on the social and economic factors.

*We do appreciate that progress has been made on sensitive environmental issues. The Bio-diversity Convention, the Climate Change Convention, Pollution Prevention Programmes and other global partnerships are vital to the protection of our planet. We recognise, however that the vital issues of financial resources and technology transfer are not adequately addressed in these processes.*

Developing countries expect global partnerships to be maintained on a more realistic and just approach.

We want to implement all universally accepted requirements for the protection of our environment but we lack the resources to do so.

This situation needs to be recognised and understood by the developed world.

But world economic and social relations continue to be unjust, inequitable and destructive for under-developed countries and the poor of the earth.

We have had to endure deformed dependent development as a result of our colonial heritage and the unfair conditions imposed by those who benefitted from the historical advantage of rapid growth in the colonial era.

The prestigious world economic forum this year concluded that a mounting backlash against the effects of economic globalisation, especially in the industrialised democracies, is threatening to disrupt economic activity and social stability and is creating a mood of helplessness and anxiety.

These poverty gaps have gained momentum and are widening in the north as well as in the south, and between the north and the south.

It is necessary therefore for this limitation in the possibilities of developing countries to be recognised by the developed world with a genuine effort to assist.

We have noticed a tendency for developed states to try to revisit earlier commitments with a view to reduce or avoid them, and an approach in new declarations to de-emphasise the economic, social and political needs while shifting emphasis to environmental issues.

The Santa Cruz Declaration and the Plan of Action reflect its shortcoming. Guyana and the rest of the Caribbean support the Declaration and Plan of Action and will work towards their implementation, but we need to make it clear that we are disappointed with the failure to deal more comprehensively with the social and economic requirements of sustainable development.

With specific reference to the Plan of Action, it is regrettable that we are only dealing with issues of education and health in a limited way which emphasise their link to environmental consideration.

Health and education are major social issues which are crucial bases for the peoples of the world to make their contribution to sustainable development.

Our Plan of Action is also deficient in its limited treatment of the special vulnerability of small island and low lying coastal states which repeatedly have had their development process hindered - infact very seriously set back - by natural disasters.

Sustainable development might be an option for large countries but an imperative for survival of small island and low-lying coastal states. The small islands and low-lying coastal states in the Caribbean are prone to pervasive damage from recurring natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanoes and tropical storms. They are extremely vulnerable to potential man-made disasters such as oil spills, nuclear accidents and sea level rise.

The Caribbean economies are essentially coastal with more than 90 per cent of the population living within 10 miles of the coast. Economic activity in the form of tourism and fishery are heavily dependent on the coral reefs, the mangroves and the beaches. These fragile co-systems are very vulnerable to damage from man-made or natural calamities.

The special vulnerabilities of small island states, especially those in the Caribbean, and the challenges of managing the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) were recognised in the Declaration and Plan of Action from the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Barbados. We are pleased that this Summit will give due recognition to the Declaration and Plan of Action from the Barbados Conference. We hope that over time, as a Hemisphere and within the Region, we will be in a position to allocate the resources necessary to facilitate meaningful and urgent implementation of the SIDS Plan of Action.

The Caribbean Community Governments are pleased that the Plan of Action from this Hemispheric Summit gives recognition to the Caribbean Sea. The Caribbean Sea impacts directly on two-thirds of the States represented at this Summit. Establishing and promoting the Caribbean Sea as a focus for sustainable development would be a major positive action by the Hemisphere in any overall thrust at sustainable development.

The sustainable development of the Caribbean will depend significantly on human resource development and availability. We have not focussed on this in any fundamental way for this Summit. The Caribbean Community believes that this issue is so important that it should be a focus for the next Hemispheric Summit in Chile.

The Caribbean Community was, frankly, very disappointed that its effort to have these major threats to our continued existence, and indeed our sustainable development, addressed in a balanced and meaningful manner in the Declaration and Plan of Action from this Summit were not as successful as it had hoped.

In spite of our disappointment that the Declaration and Plan of Action could not be stronger in content, the Caribbean Community will join with other states in the hemisphere to ensure that the issues we have identified and emphasised are

implemented efficiently in order to move over countries several steps further along the road of sustainable development.

We need to recognise however that these steps can only be limited and piecemeal.

***Sustainable development is meaningless and impossible without fundamental changes in the relationship between states.***

***It is necessary to take a holistic approach of development and the environment, especially sustainable human development.*** In the past, they saw environmental degradation as a product of industrial/economic development. Now, it is becoming increasingly evident that poverty is the biggest enemy of the environment.

We need our own strategy of development. The Latin American and Caribbean Commission on Development and Environment, sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in their report “Our Own Agenda”, pointed out that we followed a model of flawed growth:

“More than a half century of flawed development has produced total stagnation for those of us in Latin America. The burdensome external indebtedness which deprives us of the capital needed for growth and the grave economic crisis which for 10 years has further exacerbated the condition of our underprivileged class are not the causes of our problems but rather manifestations of an outworn model of growth.”

The Commission noted the need for a special strategy. The Commission reported:

“There is no universal strategy for sustainable development. The most successful strategies are based on an analysis of our own regional institutional, economic and social peculiarities and of our environmental problems. The achievement of sustainable development also requires the establishment of a medium - and long-term planning mechanism.”

Such a development strategy must combine good governance, internationally, regionally and nationally and must encourage North/South partnership, cooperation and solidarity.

This strategy must aim to alleviate, if not eradicate, poverty.

In December 1992, the lead document of the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology and Government for the North/South cooperation Conference,

called by President Jimmy Carter and UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros Ghali, noted that world hunger could be reduced by 50 per cent by the year 2000. Regrettably, no answers are forth coming.

I have circulated for your consideration a memorandum which analyses the dilemma facing developing states within the context of a global crisis which underlies the path of sustainable development in all countries, but is exceptionally severe on poorer countries. Juan de Dias Parra, leader of the Latin American Association for human rights summarised the recent trends noting that:

“In Latin America today, there are 70 million more hungry, 30 million more illiterate, 10 million more families without homes and 40 million more unemployed persons than there were 20 years ago. There are 240 million human beings who lack the necessities of life and this when the region is richer and more stable than ever according to the way, the world sees it.”

We cannot continue in such a direction. We need a New Global Human Order. My memorandum proposes inter-alia:

- A regional development (integration) fund
- Debt relief
- An American volunteer development corps
- A separate global development cooperation fund

A collective effort in this direction will benefit developed and developing countries alike and will create a more conducive environment for sustainable development. We must also strive to build a more genuine democracy having as its objective “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. This would be ensured when it is all embracing - not only representative (5 minute voting) but also consultative and participatory, particularly of women - and when not only civil and political rights but also economic social and cultural rights are realised. A person must exercise his/her right to vote but that right will be exercisable only if the food for life is available.

This must facilitate the broadest involvement of our peoples with a meaningful role for civil society in pursuing the goals of sustainable development.

In a few months we will be evaluating at the United Nations the achievements for five years after Rio.

We in this hemisphere must at this forum in a straight-forward approach of genuine criticism and self criticism identify the successes and failures of these 5 years. Especially we must see:

- what has not gone on as planned
- what we need to do to remove these obstacles and move on.

We have had enough conferences, declarations and plans of action. We need to proceed by dealing not merely with symptoms but with the root causes of our problems.

Our specific targets in our Declaration of Santa Cruz and our Plan of Action must be implemented with vigour but must be set against the background of an international effort to secure a New Global Human Order.

**Memorandum by  
His Excellency Dr Cheddi Jagan  
President of The Republic of Guyana  
to the Hemispheric Summit Conference  
on Sustainable Development**

Bolivia, December 7-8, 1996

**U**NEMPLOYMENT, poverty, hunger and social, including family, disintegration are major problems in the present world situation.

As the rich get richer at the expense of the poor in the developed North as well as the developing South, the gap in living standards between the North and the South continues to widen, there is generally a mood of gloom and concern about the future.

The President and founder, Klaus Schwab, and the Managing Director, Claude Smadja, of the prestigious World Economic Forum described this mood in a recent article “Globalisation backlash is serious” in the International Herald Tribune. They wrote:

“Economic globalisation has entered a critical phase. A mounting backlash against its effects especially in the industrial democracies, is threatening to disrupt economic activity and social stability in many countries. The mood in these democracies is one of helplessness and anxiety. This can easily turn into revolt, as December’s unrest in France showed.”

The Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) sometime ago pointed out that nearly half of the population was living at the edge of poverty. The Head of ECLAC told a recent IDB Strategy Conference in Washington that, if absolute poverty was to be reduced by half in the next fifty years, there will be the need for an annual 6 per cent economic growth rate and national savings of about 28 per cent of GDP. Considering recent trends, this will be a herculean task. In the “lost decade” of the 1980’s the rate of growth of GDP of the Latin American Countries, which had averaged 5.4 per cent per year in the 1970s, went down to only 1.5 per cent in 1981-88; as population growth exceeded 2 per cent per year, per capita GDP declined.

In the first four years of this decade, there was an average annual growth rate of about 3.5 per cent. But in 1995, the rate was only 0.6 per cent.

The fact is that there has been retrogression. In a letter to The New York Times (5 December 1993) it was pointed out that Juan de Dias Parra, leader of the

Latin American Association for Human Rights, summarised the recent trends at a meeting in Quito, Ecuador, noting that:

“In Latin America today, there are 70 million more hungry, 30 million more illiterate, 10 million more families without homes and 40 million more unemployed persons than there were twenty-years ago . . . There are 240 million human beings who lack the necessities of life and this when the region is richer and more stable than ever, according to the way the world sees it.”

“The coming year will be quite difficult for these countries,” said Peter Jenson, regional coordinator for Human Settlements at ECLAC in Santiago. “Growth has been really on only one end of the spectrum, the wealthy. The rich are getting richer and the poor getting poorer, and this will generate social conflict.”

A recent Newsweek feature story, with the face of a masked guerrilla fighter on the front cover, noted that the failure of the “Washington Consensus” and the endemic poverty, homelessness and corruption were the root causes of the return of the guerilla movement in Mexico, Peru and Colombia, reminiscent of the 1960s and 1970s. Time, a little later, on the same theme, referred particularly to the Mexican situation, pointing out that, when NAFTA was created three years ago, Mexico was mooted to emerge into first world status. But a virtual collapse occurred soon after 1994, which had repercussions in the rest of Latin America, particularly Argentina and Brazil.

In the light of these global and regional developments, it is important that we review the major issues of the Miami Summit -- democracy and free trade.

Democracy is vital for development. Guyana is a vivid example of the all-round degradation which resulted from bureaucratic/state authoritarianism, political and ethnic discrimination, extravagance, bribery and corruption. Consequently, Guyana descended from a most-developed-country status in CARICOM, when I was Premier in the early 1960s, to being among the least-developed countries in the Hemisphere, and our capital city Georgetown was degraded from a “garden city” into a “garbage city”.

Poverty is a factor of underdevelopment; development and debt are inextricably linked. UNICEF in its 1992 publication Children of the Americas noted:

“Between 1981 and 1990 Latin America spent US\$ 503 billion on foreign debt payments (US\$ 313 billion in interest). At the same time, the region’s consolidated external debt rose from US\$ 297 billion in 1981 to US\$ 428 billion in 1990. This mechanism whereby the more you pay the more you owe is perverse and must be stopped.”

The under-development and poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean are partly due to the vast net outflow from this sub-region, estimated, according to ECLAC, at an annual average of US\$36 billion in the 1980-85 period in the form of profits, dividends and debt payments. In 1994, it was actually US\$ 32 billion.

Editorialising on the Caribbean debt problem, the Daily Nation (Barbados, 7 July, 1994) stated “In a community of some seven million souls, involving member and observer countries of the Anglophone region, the combined debt stands at some US\$ 10 billion, including over US\$ 800 million for Barbados; approximately US\$ 2 billion each for Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago and some US\$ 4 billion for Jamaica.

“Guyana is generally considered as the worst-off of the externally-indebted countries, with approximately 70 per cent of government revenues currently being consumed to merely service debt repayments.

“With unemployment at totally unacceptable levels, ranging a high as some 32 per cent in some countries, and faced with declining aid and trade concessions, the CARICOM countries need all the understanding they can get from the international financial institutions and the donor community in general.

“In this context, debt forgiveness, as distinct from debt rescheduling, becomes an issue of significance to CARICOM countries desperately in need of a breathing space from the aid donor. This would allow them to come to grips with pressing domestic problems, including poverty and deteriorating social services.”

In a letter to the Managing director of the IMF, Michel Camdessus, in early 1994, I had written:

“Sir Neville Nicholls, President of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), estimates one third of the population of the Commonwealth Caribbean is living in poverty. Recent surveys indicate the incidence of poverty at about 43 per cent in Guyana, 33 in Jamaica and 23 in St Lucia. Sir Neville told a two-day regional consultation on poverty reduction that in the 1970s there had been “a general improvement in living standards of the broad masses”, due to “rapid expansion in public expenditure on social services, such as health and education.”

However, since the 1980s many countries had been unable to sustain this level of spending because of “adverse external events, inadequate or negative growth, chronic balance of payments and debt service difficulties, budget deficits.”

About the same time, Sir James Mitchell, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines told the World Bank-sponsored meeting of the Caribbean Group for Cooperation in Economic Development (CGCED) that it was “astounding that our region should be a net exporter of capital in the face of the daunting challenges of adjustment and transition that we face”.

The CARICOM economies are extremely vulnerable not only to external shocks from the international marketplace but also to natural disasters. Much of the Region is prone to hurricanes and floods, earthquakes, volcanoes and droughts.

There is also the constant threat of marine accidents in the Caribbean Sea – a heavily transited Sea for all kinds of cargo, including highly dangerous cargoes.

The CARICOM leaders told the President of the World Bank, James D. Wolfensohn, and Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chretien at recent conferences in early 1996 that small-island states face many challenges to sustainable development. For small island states such as those in CARICOM, sustainability is very dependent on the quality of the environment and human resources. Critical sectors of economic activity - agriculture including fishing, mining, as well as human settlements - put great pressure on the environment. The major economic activity in most of these countries - tourism - also puts pressure on the environment but simultaneously depends, for its existence, on the quality of the environment.

The Caribbean Sea which links the islands, is used as a major international water-way for the transport of a range of hazardous and dangerous material and wastes. It is, at the same time, the world's largest and preferred cruise corridor. Waste from cruise ships, as well as the possibility of accidents by ships carrying hazardous and dangerous materials, pose problem for CARICOM states.

The Caribbean experienced 8 hurricanes, and 24 other disasters between 1994 and 1995. Some Member States have been visited several times. Dominica, for example, has been hit by two hurricanes and one tropical storm in 1995.

CARICOM countries are also very likely to be affected by sea level rise caused by global warming and the environment is being subjected to the impact of severe weather systems. There is need therefore, for increased cooperation and collaboration within the wider Caribbean region, and between the Caribbean and the rest of the world, in the field of environmental protection, conservation, and enhancement for sustainable development.

In Guyana, during the first year (1993) of my government, debt payments amounted to 80 per cent of government revenues from all sources, and the foreign debt of over US\$2 billion necessitated payments amounting to 50 per

cent of all income from exports. During each of the two past years, there was a net outflow of capital due to huge foreign debt payments. In the last three years, Guyana paid US\$308 million. If foreign debt payments had been limited to only 10 per cent of export income, payments would have been only US\$108 million. The savings of US\$200 million would have made a significant impact to advance physical and social infrastructure development in the creation of a more conducive environment for private investment, and to raise wages and salaries from a minimum of US\$50 and a maximum of US\$1000 per month, which hinder human resources development and perpetuates the vicious circle of poverty.

We have made significant progress during the past years: a high economic growth rate averaging over 6 per cent with equity --social justice and co-justice -- for which my government has been praised by the IDB, the World Bank, the European Union, UNDP, UNICEF and the last two US Ambassadors. An IDB consultant said that "we are a small country with big ambitions . . . a shining example of a country on its way out of the abyss."

However, we need to grow much faster if we are to address the legacy of socio-economic problems we inherited -- a wrecked economy and infrastructure; 60 per cent of the people below the poverty line; 40 per cent of farm household with five acres and less and 68 per cent of them below the poverty line; over 30 per cent unemployed; high infant and maternal mortality; 22 per cent of child dropouts from primary school; functional illiteracy; about half of high school children failing in English Language and Literature, Mathematics and Science.

An American Volunteer Development Corps (AVDC) is essential because of the huge brain-drain, administrative incapacity and the high cost of consultants and advisers.

A forest Monitoring and Management Training Fund is necessary because our huge debt payments rob us of the capability to adequately man and equip our Forestry Commission. Our rich forest resources if developed on a sustainable basis, can provide rapid economic growth which is necessary for the eradication of poverty.

We are informed that our proposals at the Summit of the Americas, though objective, rational and sound are not reliable in the context of budget and balance of payments deficits. What then? Industries which provided employment and incomes in Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and elsewhere have closed and are being closed. And one of the biggest Caribbean conglomerates, Neal and Massy, declared a loss of nearly TT\$100 million (approximately US\$16m) in the first six months of 1996. And the CARICOM countries have not yet realised the end point of the lowering of their Common External Tariff (CET) to 20 per cent

in 1998. Moreover, Hemispheric Free-Trade is looming by the year 2005.

The banana industry in the Caribbean Windward Islands -- Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines -- is imperilled. Bananas account in these countries as a group for approximately 50 per cent of total production (GDP) and employs some 13 per cent of the labour force. In Dominica for example, over 70 per cent of total export earnings is from bananas. The Industry earns annually some US\$200 million for the Region.

The banana industry in the Caribbean is based on small independent farmers. The industry employs an estimated 100,000 persons in the Caribbean Community with about 250,000 persons dependent on it for their livelihood. It maintains the stability of farm/rural household incomes and provides economic justification from much of the rural development initiatives, including infrastructure such as roads and electricity, and is the major factor containing rural poverty. Its infrastructure - in particular transportation - will be critical to any programme of agricultural diversification in the Windward Islands.

This industry is threatened by Chiquita Brands International, which has annual sales of US\$2.5 billion, equivalent to six times the gross domestic product (GDP) of St. Lucia. This giant monopoly, under the banner of Free Trade, wants the abolition of the Banana Protocol of the LOME Convention, and the European Union Banana Regime under Regulation 404/93, which offers a special price to banana producers in the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries that supply only 16 per cent of the European Market, a drop from 20 per cent in 1975.

If the European market is lost by a decision of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), economic and social upheavals will follow in the Caribbean countries, which depend on banana as their major foreign currency earner.

A recent study, commissioned by the Caribbean Banana Exporters Association, found that the banana industry would indeed be destroyed if adverse changes are made to the European Banana Regime. The Industry forecasts that such an eventuality would cause widespread social and economic instability not only in banana exporting countries but the wider Caribbean community.

Financial resources are required for modernisation and the lowering of production costs. But Caribbean small island states are told that they do not qualify for soft loans: they have "graduated". However, "graduation" will bring in its train all the ills of poverty, described by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as "the world's greatest disease."

And more time is necessary for rationalisation and diversification, especially for

the “one-crop”/ “one-mineral” economies.

Perhaps, the free trade formula of the APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation), which was launched at the same time as NAFTA, should be adopted for the Americas -- 10 years for the more developed countries and 20 years for the lesser-developed countries.

In this regard, it should be noted that after the upheavals in the Caribbean Basin countries in the 1970s, when the region was declared by the US administration as one of the global “circles of crisis”, the US Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) and the Canadian CARIBCAN, did not substantially assist the Caribbean states. Because of their narrow production base, they could not take advantage of the non-reciprocal trade concessions offered by the USA and Canada, and also the European Union under the Lome Convention. During the first ten-year period of the CBI, US exports doubled to the Caribbean, while Caribbean exports to the United States increased by only 17 per cent.

It is necessary to take a holistic approach of development and the environment, especially sustainable human development: In the past, they saw environmental degradation a product of industrial/economic development. Now, it is becoming increasingly evident that poverty is the biggest enemy of the environment.

Development is not simply economic growth. There are many examples of growth without equity, without social justice and ecological preservation. The “Brazilian miracle” was not sustainable. Nor did it lead to human development.

Privatisation in the first four years of this decade led to an influx of speculative foreign capital and relatively high economic growth rates. But the Mexican collapse of December 1994 is demonstrating that much more than globalisation, liberalization, deregulation, devaluation and privatisation is needed.

Economic growth is necessary for social and human development. Equally, human development is necessary for economic development.

We need our own strategy of development. The Latin American and Caribbean Commission on Development and Environment, sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in their report “Our Own Agenda”, pointed out that we followed a model of flawed growth:

“More than half century of flawed development has produced total stagnation for those of us in Latin America. The burdensome external indebtedness which deprives us of the capital needed for growth and the grave economic crisis which for 10 years has further exacerbated the

condition of our underprivileged class are not the causes of our problems but rather manifestation of an outworn model of growth.”

The Commission noted the need for a special strategy. The Commission reported:

There is no universal strategy for sustainable development. The most successful strategies are based on an analysis of our own regional institutional, economic and social peculiarities and of our environmental problems. The achievement of sustainable development also requires the establishment of a medium - and long-term planning mechanism.

Another problem which is gaining in importance in the developing countries because of its grave and immediate consequences is the growing threat of becoming a kind of dumping ground for the industrialised countries. The danger implicit in this situation may reach a dimension similar to that of the drug traffic, with all the corruption and environmental destruction and that such entails.

Beside problems with direct environmental connotations, to which we have referred in part, other problems of an economic nature include:

- The outflow of capital from Latin America and the Caribbean to the developed countries.
- The constant deterioration of prices of the raw materials produced by countries of the region.
- The fluctuation of interest rates, fundamental in the worsening external debt problem
- The introduction of inappropriate technological patterns; and
- Commercial protectionism, among others

Such a development strategy must combine good governance, internationally, regionally and nationally. With North/South partnership, cooperation and solidarity; a national-democratic state of all classes and strata with the working class not being dominated, exploited and marginalised; the mobilisation of physical, natural and social capital; and self-help and self-reliance.

Democracy must have its objective “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. This would be ensured when it is embracing -- not only representative (5-minute voting), but also consultative and participatory, particularly of women -- and when not only civil and political rights but also economic social and cultural rights are realised. A person must exercise his/her right to vote, but that right will be exercisable only if the food necessary for life is available.

No doubt, that is why His Holiness the Pope, in his address to the World Food Summit in Rome advocated the right to food, and remarked that “countries bearing the sometimes stifling weight of international debt” would not count on being able to feed all of their people.

The Pope’s remarks were supported by the President of the World Bank. Perhaps, in the face of cuts in bilateral ODA assistance from the OECD countries, and the reluctance of the G7 industrialised states to agree for the sale of a substantial part of the IMF gold reserves for aid particularly to the very-impoverished least-developed countries, a limit should be placed on foreign debt payments -- a limit not to exceed 10 per cent of export earnings, which has been proposed by former Presidents Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Alan Garcia of Peru and Oscar Arias of Costa Rica and the British Labour Party among others.

Since, however, there will also be opposition to such a 10 per cent limit on debt payments, the international community should aim to create a separate Global Development Fund, like the one proposed at the end of World War II (UNRRA) for disbursement to both the developed North and the underdeveloped South.

Such a Fund could be administered by the ESOSVC/UNDP for disbursement to both the developed North and the underdeveloped South.

Such a Fund is Necessary to alleviate, if not eradicate, poverty.

In December 1992, the lead document of the Carnegie Commission of Science, Technology and Government for the North/South Cooperation Conference, called by President Jimmy Carter and UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros Ghali, noted that world hunger could be reduced by 50 per cent by the year 2000.

Regrettably, no answers are forthcoming. My New Global Human Order proposals to attain this objective include radical reforms embracing:

- The Roosevelt New Deal type of Works Programme involving physical, social and cultural infrastructure in order to create more jobs as at the time of the 1930s Depression.
- A reduction of the work week as mooted in Germany from 5 to 4 days or 40 to 35 hours in order to create more employment; a reduction of the pensionable age with loss of benefits.
- Debt relief in the form of debt cancellation, grants and soft loans will cause greater economic growth in the South, which in turn will help to access goods and services from the North, thus creating opportunities

for employment.

- A new EU/ACP LOME Convention with enhanced assistance for the developing countries.
- A refashioned Alliance for Progress for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Financial resources for the Global Development Cooperation Fund can be found from:

- Demilitarisation funds - three percent cuts in global military expenditure can yield US\$460 billion in the 1995-2000 period;
- A global tax on energy. A tax of US\$1 on each barrel of oil (and its equivalent on coal) would yield around US\$66billion annually.
- Pollution taxes
- A \$5 to \$10 tax on long distance air travel.
- Taxing global speculative foreign exchange movements. A tax of 0.05 per cent on the value of each transaction can yield US\$150 billion annually. Nobel Prize Winner, economist James Tobin recommends a 0.5 per cent tax, which will yield a much greater sum.

Payments for services by poor countries can also be made to ensure global human security. This can be for environmental controls, destruction of nuclear weapons and controlling communicable diseases and narcotics. Compensation should also be paid for brain drain, exclusion of unskilled labour and restrictions on trade.

The 1930 Depression spawned President Roosevelt's "New Deal" Programme. And after the Cuban Revolution President Kennedy's "New Frontier" introduced the Alliance for Progress.

In introducing his Alliance for Progress on March 13, 1961, President Kennedy pleaded for reforms:

"Those who possess wealth and power in the poor nations must accept their own responsibilities. They must lead the fight for those basic reforms which alone can preserve the fabric of their own societies. Those who made peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

However, those reforms were not carried out by the Latin American oligarchy -

the triarchy of power (the military, the upper Clergy and the latifundistas) - with tragic consequences for the people.

Today, the OECD countries are calling for a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development for the reduction of absolute poverty by 50 per cent by the year 2015. The World Food Summit in Its Action Plan has set the same goal.

Let us demonstrate the necessary political will. The United Nations must play an integral role in global economic growth and human development, for radical reforms toward the creation of a New Global Human Order.



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